Oral history with approximately 40 year old female, British Columbia (Transcription)

<unintelligible text> Begin M 29 A(1) July 29, 1974 Accession No. 539, Tape No. 1, Track No. 1.

Mr. Reimer: <unintelligible text>, when did you first move into a logging camp?

<unintelligible text>: The first one was in 1934, up in APL; it was APL they called it, a part of Alberni Pacific.

Mr. Reimer: Alberni Pacific Logging Company?

<unintelligible text>: Nahmint Bay, that was down the river about 14 miles or something from Port Alberni, and I was there two months.

Mr. Reimer: And what was your husband doing there?

<unintelligible text>: He was fireman on the, you know, locomotive. It was an oil burner then. He was a fireman.

Mr. Reimer: What were your accommodations like there?

<unintelligible text>: We got a three-room house, kitchen, living room and the bedroom. We had running water, but we had no plumbing, just water in the sink, that was all. We had lights.

Mr. Reimer: Did you find that was adequate?

<unintelligible text>: Oh, that was the first time out and I thought that was nice. I mean, I'm a country girl anyway. I mean, we lived

on the farm and had nothing, you know, like in the city. It was just all coal-oil lamps and stuff like that, so I'm used to that.

Interviewer: What kind of a stove did you have?

<unintelligible text>: I had a wood stove, brand new one. I bought it to go up there.

Interviewer: Who looked after the fuel for that?

<unintelligible text>: My husband cut the wood. In his spare time he was cutting big blocks of wood. He worked six days a week, and on the Sunday he'd go out and cut wood with this big drag saw. Where there was a log that was, you know, no good, that they dumped - they didn't intend to use it for their purpose - on the way from where they were dumping logs, he'd get off and throw a few of these blocks on top of the flatcar, you know, going up, and then he'd roll them off going by the house. That's how he got it home.

Interviewer: The railroad ran right by the house?

<unintelligible text>: Right by the house, yes.

Interviewer: Could you describe what Nahmint Bay camp looked like?

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<unintelligible text>: Well, there was 15 families living in this little community. They were living about one mile from where the boats were coming in. Like we had to walk the railroad track to go up and get the mail and catch the little boat that goes into Port Alberni and that.

Mr. Reimer: So you were along the Alberni Canal about a mile back from the water, is that right?

<unintelligible text>: Yes, and along the railroad track - it was all houses on both sides of the railroad track. They were moved from Camp Five, I guess. That was just a new camp and wasn't there very long, but they moved the houses from Franklin River, I believe, or some other place. I heard them talking about it, but they were moved from elsewhere and they were old bunkhouses converted into....

Mr. Reimer: Was that a common thing, to move the houses around?

<unintelligible text>: Oh, yes, they were all on skids. This house is on skids.

Mr. Reimer: Is it?

<unintelligible text>: Yes. It has timbers, two timbers. It's sitting on two timbers and if they want to tow it away from here, they just hook it up and drag it, but if they have to move it any distance, they put it up on a flatcar.

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Mr. Reimer: Where did the single men live?

<unintelligible text>: They were on the float. The bunkhouses were on the float where the boats were coming in. The bunkhouses were there.

Mr. Reimer: Why did you think they had a separate place for the single men to live?

<unintelligible text>: Well, they wouldn't be very.... Some places families live on floats, that there's no other way of setting up the houses. I knew a lot of families who lived on floats, but there was no place to put the houses right.... Well, that was the easiest way because they moved the camp from elsewhere, and they set up bunkhouses and the cookhouse and everything, and the office. We used to go and pick the mail up once a day.

Mr. Reimer: Do you think they tried to keep the single men separate from...?

<unintelligible text>: Not really, that was just the way this camp was set up, because, like at Harrison Lake, when we lived there, well, I could see the bunkhouses, you know. They were down close to the water, but the houses were up a little higher, up the hill. But this is the way some camps are. They didn't really try to separate them, it's just the way it was. I've been in a lot of other places and the bunkhouses were close where the families

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and homes were.

Mr. Reimer: Loggers have a reputation for being rough men. How did you find them?

<unintelligible text>: Yes. Well, to me, you find an assortment, it doesn't matter where you go. But being away from the cities and single men, it's a natural thing when they work hard all week, the weekend comes, and some of them in during the week. They just.... For something to do in the city they can go to a show and, of course, they had shows there once a week, you know. They'd get the films in - they didn't at Nahmint Bay, but they did at Sayward. We had our show once a week and everybody would go for something to do, but as far as.... You find that in any city or any variety of men. My husband was single and when he first came he went right into it and he was doing the same thing because this is all they had to do. And they come into town, well naturally.... But they can get hooked in being excessive drinkers, and this is what gets, you know.... Sometimes it's not so easy to keep a job if you're like that.

Mr. Reimer: Well, what do you mean when you say that they could get hooked?

<unintelligible text>: On being excessive drinkers. It interferes with their work in some cases, but a lot of them, what they do in their spare time is their business. But when they're always on the

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job, well, that's fine, nobody.... But I find that to me, it don't.... We live our life in our own home and don't have to go and celebrate with the rest of them if we don't want to. It's not compulsory or anything. But you find they have their gatherings and they have their dances and they have their bingo, and there's lots around these places. But now the road is in and they get out every weekend - as soon as they finish work on Friday, they take off. And a lot of men work here; they have families living in Courtenay, Comox and Union Bay and all through the ... you know. A lot of them, they're married men but their families live elsewhere and they go away for the weekends. But I always liked it. Wherever your husband works, that's your home, and it's been this way for the past 40 years. Off and on we've moved into town and I stayed in town for a little while until he got a house again whenever he went out. But very few ever stayed, you know, for a long time. Like there are ... like <unintelligible text>, they've been here for a long time. And this is the only camp he ever worked, that is, for Englewood Division. But not too ... <unintelligible text> (?) been here a long time, and there's a few others. Of course, we've been here going on, well, it will be 28 years this coming September, but before we moved quite a bit.

Mr. Reimer: You were telling me that you left the APL camp at Nahmint Bay under rather unpleasant circumstances.

<unintelligible text>: Yes, it was because the men wouldn't go to work under the conditions. They wanted these men restored that had been,

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you know, disposed of, you'd say - a little easier.

Mr. Reimer: Those are the men that were fired....

<unintelligible text>: The men that had taken part in the union. And even if they were passing the union paper around, they were.... The way they did it is, they were taken off the job and taken to the wharf and just sent out. When men came home from work at night, these men were gone. Nobody knew until they found out later where they went. They were taken out of camp. This is why men who....

Mr. Reimer: Who was doing that?

<unintelligible text>: Well, the superintendent.

Mr. Reimer: Was he the owner of the company?

<unintelligible text>: No, he was just working. I mean, he takes his orders from higher-ups too. You know, <unintelligible text> was the superintendent of this camp and it got so that there was too many disappearing so the men called a meeting and decided to go on strike, and my husband didn't even know, because he was, as I said, a mile away from the bunkhouses. He went to work in the morning. He steamed up -they used to steam up then,

not like the now, the diesel is different - and he blew a whistle and nobody came out. You know, he blew a whistle for men to come out and get in the crummy; you know the crummy is the car that the men ... now they go in trucks.

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Then they went by railroad. He didn't know that the men were out on strike until nobody came out and then somebody came out and said: "We're on strike. We're not going to work." So then a lady across the track came in and she said: "Do you know the camp's on strike?" I said no. I said: <unintelligible text> went to work this morning and he's not back." Then she said: "My husband just came back and he said they're on strike." So then I waited until about eight o'clock and then finally the rest of the men started coming back. And they took a vote; like the foreman, the superintendent, told them to go to work.

They sort of grouped around, they were talking about it and then they said they wouldn't go to work under the conditions, you know. So then they came home and then the next they knew the word came around for the family men to go out because the bunkhouse men were gone, right away. They didn't stay there because the cookhouse was closed and everything. So they went and had a gathering with the superintendent and he asked them to go to work or pack and leave. So they started packing.

The 'Maquinna' just went through. That's the boat that only came around one in 10 days, and it just went through so they had to wait till the next one, so they had lots of time to pack - like they had to crate the furniture and everything. And 12 families left and three stayed. One was the cook - I imagine he maybe was a salary man - and the timekeeper. Oh, there must have been more than....

And then next door to us, by the name of Miller, he had done that so many times, you know. I don't want to mention the word, what he's done. He was a strikebreaker, you know. He's done it

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so many times that he couldn't get a job. Nobody would work with him. He was a faller at one time, but the fallers refused to work with him. And he had done it at the mine - well, scabbed, you might as well call him that word - and he was staying again. But the fallers wouldn't work with him so the company gave him a job packing the ... they call it a grub, you know, up to surveyors up in the woods where they stayed there and then there's a man that brings out whatever, and that was his job at the time, and he stayed again. So the women called him that word - which I don't like, that word. It's not very nice. To me, that was the first experience being in a place where that sort of thing went on and I thought it wasn't very nice. Right then I said: "I hope I never experience this again." The air was just thick with bad feelings.

Mr. Reimer: So the strike doesn't just affect the men, but it affects the women.

<unintelligible text>: Oh yes, absolutely. Some of the women, they said: "Well, I'll starve before I'll have my husband scab." You know, just like that. There is some in this camp. So I mean, my husband would never work under conditions like that, even if they say: "Starve before", he would do that. Anyway, six families moved to Vancouver. We put our furniture ... and that furniture sat on the wharf all day waiting for the boat and it was just soaked right through. It just rained. I think that was the heaviest rain we had that day.

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Well, it rained for days in November, and it rained a lot up there. As I told you, when our furniture arrived